

ASIA REQUIRES QUANTUM LEAP IN CLEAN ENERGY INVESTMENT, TECHNOLOGY TO ACHIEVE LOW-CARBON FUTURE

The market for clean energy continues to grow rapidly in Asia, but the region must substantially scale up investment and adoption of the latest technologies if it is to transition to a low-carbon economy.

That was the message heard as hundreds of clean energy policymakers, project developers, investors and technical experts met in Manila today for the opening of the Asia Clean Energy Forum (ACEF). The forum is co-organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Resources Institute (WRI).

“We are seeing a change in the way the world approaches the transition and efforts to move to a low-carbon future,” said U.S. Ambassador Harry Thomas, Jr. “The United States continues to be committed to building partnerships with other countries, to developing new solutions, and to assisting where needed to tackle the common challenge of transitioning to a clean energy, low-carbon future.”

Through the multi-lateral Private Financing Advisory Network, supported by USAID and a number of other countries, innovative new clean energy projects across Asia are being nurtured. In Aklan province, a major biomass plant using local agricultural waste was launched to make the province self-sufficient in electricity. In Maguindanao, a small primary school in Kabuling village received a solar lighting system from the American firm SunPower Corporation. And last year, the USAID along with the Australian Government, national lighting associations from around Asia and some of the largest lighting companies in the world launched the Asia Lighting Compact, a new framework that will encourage the widespread adoption of energy efficient lighting.

The worldwide market for sustainable and renewable energy has continued to grow in the face of the global economic downturn, and Asia is leading the way. In fact, it is safe to say that Asia is in the process of becoming the center of this global transition to clean energy.

Senior officials at ACEF stressed the importance of a new approach to help countries transition to a clean energy economy: one focused on pragmatic actions, results that can be measured and quantified, and sharing knowledge and technology transfer.

In his opening remarks to the Forum, ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda said, “There are many low carbon technologies with the potential to bring impressive benefits to the Asia-Pacific region. But due to many barriers, from price to intellectual property concerns, these technologies are not being used in the region. Bringing down these barriers is the next challenge. Connected to that is the funding that will be needed to actually deploy these technologies. This funding can only truly be supplied by the private sector.”

Besides technology transfer, a number of the sessions at ACEF will focus on energy efficiency as the “low-hanging fruit” of greenhouse gas reductions, in particular how to get policy incentives right and best practices in financing energy efficiency projects.

ACEF in 2009 was dominated by news of government stimulus programs and large-scale public clean energy programs. At this year’s forum, with the world economy recovering, the private

sector is once again seen as the driving force in developing renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives.